



Water Wheel

Being one with all Buddhas, I turn the water wheel of compassion.

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

Home Dwellings

by Katherine Daiki Senshin Griffith



*The person in the hut lives here calmly,
Not stuck to inside, outside, or in between.
Places worldly people live, she doesn't live.
Realms worldly people love, she doesn't love.
Though the hut is small, it includes the
entire world.*

—from Shitou's *Song of the Grass-Roof Hermitage*¹

Recently, several ZCLA members became novice priests in an ordination ceremony called *shukke tokudo*, which traditionally means “leaving home, attaining the way.” Today, both priests and lay practitioners keep their home lives. In fact, post-pandemic, people still seem somewhat wary of leaving their homes at all.

What is home? What makes something home?

Near the end of her life when she was in hospice, my mother, who was growing more confused about where she was, would often say, “I feel fine – I just want to go home.” My siblings and I didn't really know to which home she was referring. To what stage of her life did she want to return?

I saw news footage of a young boy, on foot with other kids being displaced from Gaza, crying, “I just want to go home!” I'm sure the Israeli hostages really want to go home too. Even if they have a clear idea of what they mean by home, that home doesn't exist anymore. Things have changed forever. True for us all.

Due to natural disasters, brutal invasions or unjust conditions, many are displaced or forced to flee their homes, while others have no housing. Half-Palestinian and half-Ukrainian, Zoya El-Miari is a young woman who has been displaced twice. Her dad is Palestinian from Lebanon. Her mom is Ukrainian. She grew up in the largest refugee

camp in Lebanon, built after the Palestinians were forced to flee their homes in 1948. Her community was filled with child abuse, mental illnesses, and ongoing clashes until she was 15. When bad stuff happened in Lebanon, they'd always go for safe haven in Ukraine. But when the war started in Ukraine, they became refugees for a second time. Continuously always being in a survival mode made her grow up questioning, “What is home to me?”

In our meal gatha, we chant: *Abiding in this ephemeral world, Like a lotus in muddy water.* I love the term “abide,” which means to continue in a place. In the movie *The Big Lebowski*, Jeffrey Lebowski (aka “The Dude”), proclaims “The Dude abides,” suggesting stability and constancy. But in our ever-changing world, our abode shifts. There is nothing to hold onto. We are all temporary inhabitants of these skin-bags for just a little while.

We acknowledge the land we currently inhabit was originally the unceded home of many indigenous peoples. It is also the current home of trees, grass, flowers, plants, cats, racoons, birds, mice, bugs, and myriad other forms of life. How do we make reparations for stolen homes or show better respect for the land and its shared resources?

What is home for you? Is it where you grew up or where you are now? Is it where the climate or terrain most suits you or where all your stuff is? Is it the place where you have your family, or a dream job, or heritage, or like-minded people? If we are from a different background, culture or orientation, we might not feel at home or safe just anywhere. How can we help others feel at home?

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¹Translated by Taigen Dan Leighton and Kazuaki Tanahashi

HOME DWELLINGS (Continued from page 1)

Sometimes home is a time we want to go back to. A time or place where we feel most comfortable, free to be safe and fully ourselves. To be at home in what we are doing can feel great. To be at home is to be at ease.

Buddhist psychologist Rick Hanson says:

When the body is not disturbed by hunger, thirst, pain, or illness, and when the mind is not disturbed by threat, frustration, or rejection, then most people settle into their resting state, a sustainable equilibrium in which the body refuels and repairs itself and the mind feels peaceful, happy, and loving. I call this our Responsive mode of living. It is our home base...

As soon as you have a sense of home . . . you are home! Because body and mind are inclined toward the Responsive mode, any sense of ease in the body or feeling of calm, contentment, or caring in the mind will start activating some Responsive circuits in your brain. This will naturally light up associated circuits with a cascading, snowballing effect throughout the Responsive network.

Your body and mind want to come home: that's where energy is conserved for the marathon of life, where learning is consolidated, where resources are built rather than expended, and where pains and traumas are healed. Your whole being is always leaning toward home. Can you let yourself tip forward into your deepest nature?

The spiritual longing to come home is universal. Many people who come to Zen say, "this feels like coming home." Is this a feeling of coming back to one's true self, one's deepest nature?

In zazen, we return to our breath, being fully present and at home in our bodies, no matter what feelings or thoughts may filter through. We just abide as a body relaxing, so intimate, that it feels like coming home. We expand to being at home with our senses, actions, and others. Dissolving all gaps, we can eventually be at home anywhere, with the whole universe, with whatever is happening, with life itself.

In the Tokudo Ceremony, the preceptor tells the new priest, "Your world has just gotten a whole lot bigger." For non-monastic practitioners, we often say the "whole world is our monastery." Buddha in the *Itivuttaka* scripture says:

Householders and the homeless (monastics) in mutual dependence both reach the true Dharma.

The true Dharma is reflected in the chant:

*Atta Dipa (You are the light)
Viharatha (Dwell - while staying as a guest)
Atta Sarana (You are the refuge.)*

Dwelling in that light, may require us to shift our perspective. And change can be challenging, especially big shifts. Moving to a new home is said to be one of the most stressful activities. As we grow in practice, we learn to let go of our "stuff," and expand into new ways of doing things. Can we be at home in these new ways? Can we feel at home amongst differences? If we drop our old stories, what new ones are we creating?

Zoya El-Miari promised herself that if she made it out alive, she'd refuse to become a victim as before, when she was afraid of being bullied because she lived in a single room with her whole family for the first 15 years of her life. This led her to establish "Waves to Home," a global storytelling movement for those who have been forced to leave their homes and their lives behind. It provides a safe space for refugees, migrants, and displaced people to tell their stories, find their inner strength in the process, and inspire the world with their resilience. They believe that the power of storytelling can change the way we see ourselves and our experiences, and ultimately, change lives.

*Dissolving all gaps we can
be home anywhere.*

My mother didn't like schmaltzy obits and wanted hers to say "she died and we don't know where the hell she is." Since her death, I've been chanting the Guiding Words Upon Passing, which include these lines:

*Recognize your original dwelling place by its qualities:
pure clarity, bright luminosity, and vast spaciousness.
You are released now from all earthly concerns and ties.
Go forward to rejoin your original home, at one with emptiness
and that great energy of creation.*

Do we have to literally die, shed our bodies, to find this original dwelling? This place before your mother was born--or wherever the hell my mother is now? Or can we taste it now, wherever we are? *Not stuck to inside, outside, or in between.* Just deep abiding wherever we find ourselves, rooted in our original home which is always there.

If we commit to our practice, expanding past our narrow views of comfort, self and other, then we can be like Dogen Zenji and say:

*Do not ask me where I am going as I travel this limitless world,
where every step I take is my home.*

Sensei Senshin is the ZCLA Head Teacher.

Sustaining Practice

by Lorraine Gessbo Kumpf



The Buddha teaches us that everyone has the nature of awakening, and everyone's spiritual journey unfolds uniquely. It's easy to be inspired by the sutras and the wise words of teachers, but once one decides to take hold of the Buddha Way in order to cut a trajectory for change and transformation, a profound commitment is required, one that

entails effort and patience. For me, this journey has not been a straight line, and I have often needed to revitalize my practice. How do you maintain your Zen practice, keep on training, and sustain its development?

The monk Shantideva, in his text *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, had a lot to say about this. Shantideva lived in 8th century India, in the Buddhist monastery/university at Nalanda. He addressed men in monasteries, an environment so removed from our lives, but he offers teachings that apply to us now. The first step is to practice meditative concentration, by way of which we can let go of all distractions and see through the ego-self. We can gain wonderful insight this way, but we can lose it; it can drain away. Shantideva aims to energize people's meditation: he urges, threatens, scolds, cajoles, describes the horrible fates of those who let go of practice. An example of his poetic style:

*Suffering will beat you down,
So take advantage of this human boat;
Free yourself from sorrow's mighty stream!
This vessel will be later hard to find:
The time you have now is not for sleep. [...]
Do not be downcast, but marshal all your powers.
Make and effort; be the light unto yourself!*¹

Shantideva suggests the "log of wood" practice, excerpted here:

*If at the outset, when I check my mind, I find that it is tainted with some fault, I shall be still, unmoving like a log of wood.
People who strive to concentrate should always watch their minds, inquiring, "Where is my mind now engaged?" And if you find yourself engaged in different kinds of pointless conversation and curious thoughts, [...] and feelings of desire or anger arise, do not act and do not speak! Stay like a log of wood.
And when your mind is wild or amused with mockery, or filled with pride and haughty arrogance, or when you want to fish for praise, or criticize and spoil another's name, then like a log you*

should remain. And when you yearn for wealth, attention, and fame, or when you look for recognition, then like a log you should remain.

*And when you overlook another's need, and want to get the best thing for yourself, then like a log you should remain. Impatience, indolence, faintheartedness, arrogance and careless speech—when these arise, then like a log you should remain.*²

In other words, Shantideva says 'STOP!' I have found this 'STOP' to be a helpful teaching. (In some Zen texts, the log or block of wood bears the connotation of emptiness. I don't know if Shantideva alludes to this, but it fits.)

The worst obstacle of all, Shantideva says, is what he calls LAZINESS. Laziness can be inactivity, lack of physical effort, or it can refer to psychological barriers that draw us away from practice—for example, the feeling that "I can't do it," "I'm no good/unworthy" or defeatism in other forms. Also, Laziness can mean being too comfortable. "Oh, my great teacher will take care of me," "I'm fine, it's all good" etc. Shantideva counters laziness by generating URGENCY! DEATH is coming, so get your act together!

It is important to WANT to practice, to be inspired. But Shantideva makes a distinction between ASPIRATION and ENGAGEMENT. Aspiration means a strong desire to achieve something or a profound wish. But it doesn't entail action; aspiration alone isn't enough to sustain a transformative practice. I was inspired by Maezumi Roshi, and I knew from the start that my aspiration was to learn what true compassion meant and to practice it. I didn't know how much effort it would take to explore this question! It takes genuine engagement, along with patience and a kind of fearlessness to really explore—to do what it takes to build concentration, to experience the present, to see through the small self, to live a life that reflects the journey. One thing that can help sustain this journey is having experiences of awareness or particular clarity. These experiences are not unusual. Of course, we must let go of them, but the experiences may give us confidence that we are on the right path. They may shift the ground and help give us the energy to keep going.

I would like to put in a good word for habit. An acquaintance of mine, a long-time practitioner who left Zen practice, said, "I wasn't really practicing; it was just a habit." They assumed a negative sense of habitual behavior, such as unconsciously seeking comfort. But alternatively: what have I been cultivating in the zendo if not habits? Cultivating the habit of being present! Developing the habit of attention! Most of what I do in formal practice

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¹The Padmakara Translation Group edition (2011) captures Shantideva's poetic style in English.

²From *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, ch. 7, "Vigilant Introspection," pp. 59-60.

SUSTAINING PRACTICE *(Continued from page 3)*

I do again, and again, and again...particularly the act of returning to the present moment. Habit, as I am using the word, creates energy, in the way that Roshi Egyoku talks about developing “practice muscle.” How we practice daily constitutes the reps it takes to build that muscle.

Further, to sustain practice, I consider the vow. Teachers throughout our tradition have kept and taught vows. It’s a powerful way to develop spiritual practice.

For example, we receive the Precepts, vowing to uphold the basic teachings of ethical behavior, and we renew them again and again. You may find that the Precept vows take hold of you, affect your behavior and become a part of you over time.

The Bodhisattva is an awakened being who puts aside their own enlightenment in order to help everyone to awaken: to serve until there is no one left who needs service. Here is Shantideva’s vow:

*Just as all the Buddhas of the past have brought forth
the awakened mind,
And in the Precepts of the Bodhisattvas step-by-step
abode and trained,
Likewise, for the benefit of all beings I will bring to birth
the awakened mind,
And in those Precepts, step-by-step, I will abide and
train myself.*

If you’ve attended programs at ZCLA you’ve probably chanted the four Bodhisattva vows. Our version is:

*Numberless beings, I vow to serve them.
Inexhaustible delusions, I vow to end them.
Boundless Dharmas, I vow to practice them.
Unsurpassable Buddha Way, I vow to embody it.*

Just as it is impossible to literally follow every precept, so it is with the Bodhisattva vows. Yet they work in us, to serve, to be present, to follow the teachings. The vow is like a reference point or guidepost. We align our life, our behaviors and thoughts, according to the vows we make.

One kind of vow is a statement of deep life purpose. Chosen Bays Roshi, abbot of the Great Vow Monastery and a successor of Taizan Maezumi Roshi, expresses her life vow: to become fully enlightened. In her book about vows, *The Vow-Powered Life*, she presents other kinds of vows and their influence on us. She relates a time that Maezumi Roshi was asked, “Do Buddhists believe in something permanent that continues after death?” And he replied, “Rather, we believe in the vow.” Maezumi Roshi’s vow was to spread the Dharma in the West, and 70 or so

years later, with Zen centers throughout the world, we can see the power of that vow.

Anyone can create their own vows to help clarify and energize their practice. These can be life-scope vows or more specific, narrow-scoped vows. A more specific vow can directly relate to a greater one. For example, I vow to bear witness to my inner and outer critic; this vow helps me catch deeply conditioned thoughts as they arise. Making explicit vows can help clarify what your practice is about.

An important way to sustain practice is to engage with the community of practitioners. This includes not only regularly engaging with a teacher, but also connecting with the whole sangha. One of our main ancestors, Keizan Zenji, emphasized this, even for the most senior of leaders: “Even if you’ve trained carefully in a monastery, practicing a long time with a teacher, clarifying the matter of life and death, and attaining enlightenment, you should continue to train with others.” If you simply enjoy peace and quiet alone on some mountain, he said, you are “lacking in the Mind of the Way.”³

When he referred to community, Keizan Zenji meant the monastic sangha: the refinement of one’s awareness takes place in connecting with other monks. Our situation is different in many respects, but I believe that our sangha is a basic stage for putting our practice to work and for realizing interconnection. If a person shares the Buddha Way with me, I assume their “spiritual friendship.” It’s not a social affinity, but rather a trust that we are taking this path, and can support each other in practice. To train in Zen demands deep inner work, and that work is clearly expressed when we engage with one another. One name for this engagement is Collective Awareness.

Does this sound like “Zen stink?” To get real, here’s an example: early in my practice at ZCLA, I was locked in a toxic contest of mutual critique with a fellow sangha member. We couldn’t see beyond it. Then one day this person invited me to a day of hiking, fun and heart-to-heart talk. This event caused a great shift in me: not only did the acrimony dissolve, but I saw how a spiritual friend can reveal and enliven my practice. I’m still grateful for that person’s maturity. Our core practice of sitting meditation and study with a teacher can be energized and sustained in many ways.

Dharma-Holder Gessho is the ZCLA Senior Resident.

³ Cook, Francis H., trans. 1991. *The Record of Transmitting the Light*. pp. 84-85.

Now This

by Eberhard Konin Fetz



At the end of our ZCLA pilgrimage to India in 2006 our guide, Shantum Seth, suggested that we each compose a verse around some impression of the trip. Mine was entitled “Bus Practice”:

*Reality speeds quickly past my window.
Intricate worlds in rapid succession.
Too fast for thought.
But just right for awakening.*

Just witnessing the tachistoscopic succession of worlds outside the bus window created a state of blissful awareness and suspension of thought. The arts have provided examples of collaged material that evokes this experience. Nam Jun Paik created complex video collages to be displayed on his variously assembled monitors. In these movies, brief snippets of video last just long enough to stimulate a percept but are quickly succeeded by the next snippet, which aborts any mental response to the previous. An endless tsunami of totally different video images: flying birds, politicians, movie clips, war footage, abstract forms, drawn outlines; presented in collapsing frames, contorted, superimposed, colors altered, etc.: vast, endless, and relentless (see at <https://njpvideo.ggcf.kr>). The cumulative result is a visual massage not only of the visual system, but also of the conceptual corridors of the mind.

Similarly, John Cage created a collage of auditory snippets called “Fontana Mix” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05wBPhWD44U>). Rapidly succeeding sound bites of instruments, voices, noise, radio snippets, tones, explosions, etc., each evoking a distinct experience and changing from one moment to the next. Again, the mind just becomes aware of the newly arisen sound image before it is replaced by the next. Numerous works of “musique concrète” provide further examples of sounds

collaged over successive moments.

Paik’s videos and Cage’s musique concrète have the same effect as the kaleidoscopic flow of scenes outside a bus or train window. They create a state of awareness liberated from normal mental activity, particularly trains of thought. Psychedelic experiences have similar effects, scrambling all dimensions of mental experience in a tsunami of conscious forms.

In fact, these video and audio collages emulate the succession of instantaneous conscious experiences in everyday life. Usually, the mind glosses over these intricate instants and organizes conscious awareness into trains of thought and mental associations. However, the granularity of what is actually happening can be appreciated by deliberately refreshing these

experiences immediately. By promptly aborting nascent thought forms before they capture consciousness one can stay aware of the next immediate event. What is witnessed then is a succession of quite different and complex experiences, each one flashing into consciousness and totally impermanent. Now this, now this, now this... Too fast for thought.

But just right for awakening to the only constant in the ev-

er-changing contents of consciousness: awareness itself. The ever-present spark of awareness continues to energize endless forms. In the razor edge of now, separating past and future, which don’t exist, there arises infinitely rich reality. As Huang Po put it, “What you see before you is it. Think about it and you at once fall into error.” Without thought the succession of immediate experiences transforms into awareness of being.

Now THIS.

Dr. Fetz (Konin) is a member of ZCLA and is Professor Emeritus in the Departments of Physiology & Biophysics and DXARTS at the University of Washington, Seattle WA.



Collage by Konin.

The Seven Hundredth Anniversary of Keizan Zenji

Four ZCLA Sangha members made their way to Japan in April to participate in a set of ceremonies marking the 700th anniversary of the passing of Keizan Zenji, one of the two founders of the Japanese Soto School.



(L to R) Nem Etsugen Bajra, Yoko Gyokuren Bajra, Sensei Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert, Ryo Asakumo, our friend in Japan, and John Kyogen Rosania in Kyoto train station.

The event was organized by the Sotoshu International Department, which includes four regions: North America, South America, Europe and Hawaii (Hawaii is considered its own region).

Participants from the four regions visited Eihei-ji and Soji-ji temples as well as the International Department's headquarters in Tokyo. North America was strongly represented with members from the White Plum Asanga including, among others, Great Vow Monastery (Ore-



The entrance to Eihei-ji Monastery



The large main Buddha Hall at Soji-ji.

gon), Sweetwater Zen Center (San Diego), New York Zen Center, Upaya Zen Center (New Mexico), and those from the international sangha including members from Brazil, Columbia, Ireland, England, France, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, and more.

The Temple Roots of the Sotoshu

Dogen Zenji (1200-1253) is often called the “father” of the Soto Zen Lineage. He taught monks in a monastery deep in the mountains called Eihei-ji, in the present day area of Fukui, and wrote the large body of work called the Shobogenzo. “Eihei-ji” means “The Temple of Eternal Peace” and is one of Soto Zen's two head temples.

Keizan Zenji (1264-1325) is often called the “mother” of the Soto school. He was born and raised as an only child to a family with deep faith in Kanzeon Bodhisattva. Historians write that Keizan Zenji's religious life was sustained by his mother's and grandmother's great faith in Kanzeon. In fact, Keizan Zenji's grandmother was one of the first female disciples of Dogen Zenji and his mother, Ekan Daishi, was a nun and abbess of Joju-ji temple.

Keizan Zenji entered Eihei-ji at the age of eight, twenty-three years after Dogen Zenji died. After receiving Dharma transmission from his teacher Gikai Zenji, Keizan Zenji founded Yoko-ji Temple. A unique characteristic of Keizan Zenji was his broad inclusive stance. When he sent priests to regional temples, he allowed them to incorporate local practices into the life of the temple, allowing Soto Zen to grow with and along side community life.

At his death, Keizan Zenji had eight disciples that he sent to eight different temples. Soji-ji temple was donated to him and he sent Gasan Joseki (whose name we chant at morning service) there because he believed the community lacked faith and Gasan Joseki was his least promising heir. He took over the temple at forty-eight and taught for forty years. Gasan Joseki had twenty-eight disciples.

Today, 98% of Soto Zen is associated with Soji-ji and Gasan Joseki! Maezumi Roshi, along with his brothers and father Baian Hakuun all trained at Soji-ji Temple. The character “Soji” means “to hold on to virtue and not lose it.” We, in the West, know about Soto Zen and the work of Dogen Zenji because of the broad, inclusive spirit of Keizan Zenji and Gasan Joseki.



One of the zendos at Soji-ji.

Koshin-ji Temple

The four of us agreed that the most heartfelt experience was our visit to the Kuroda family temple, Koshin-ji, currently led by Maezumi Roshi's nephew, Rev. Taiko Kuroda.

The temple is quite large with multiple beautiful altars, a kindergarden and elementary school, and a large graveyard that rises up the hillside to the rear of the property.

Crests of Soji-ji and the White Plum

The crest of Zen Center of Los Angeles is similar to the crest of Soji-ji but with fewer leaves. Soji-ji has a pattern of 5-7-5, while the White Plum has a pattern of 3-5-3.

Going Forward

ZCLA will be organizing another pilgrimage trip to Japan in the next few years, to strengthen the connection between Zen Center and our Japanese roots. Perhaps you will join?



Rev. Taiko Kuroda wearing the LA Dodgers cap, a gift from ZCLA.



The main hall at Koshin-ji.



The crest at Soji-ji hanging in the main Buddha Hall.



The crest of the White Plum, courtyard Koshin-ji.

Text: Kyogen. Photos: Sensei Dharma-Joy and Kyogen.

Peace Over Violence

An Interview with Muso



ZCLA Board President Patti Muso Giggans has been the Executive Director of Peace Over Violence (formerly Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women) since 1985. The recipient of numerous awards, she has held leadership and advisory positions in the sexual assault and domestic violence arena both statewide and nationally and is considered a national expert on sexual and domestic violence, teen dating violence, and youth violence prevention. Sensei Senshin interviewed her for the Water Wheel.

WW: How did you first come to ZCLA?

Muso: I stumbled on it, really. My partner Ellen (ZCLA member Reigen Ledley) was a wandering Jew, taking us to different places each year for the High Holy Days. In 1998, we read there was a High Holy Day Service in the garden of a Zen center. I'd had just a surface interest in Zen from my martial arts background. We found the place so lovely and were very impressed with Rabbi Don Singer. Roshi Egyoku recognized me from her volunteer work on our domestic abuse hotline. Later, when we had tea, I told her most of my meditation had been in motion, with martial arts. She suggested I try sitting meditation and I've been here ever since, including when she Ascended the Mountain in 1999. Ellen and I took the precept class series, not knowing anything about Jukai until people were talking about sewing their rakus. Receiving



Muso with Roshi Egyoku.

Jukai was very motivating, and we got more serious about our Zen Practice.

WW: Tell me about your martial arts experience.

Muso: When I started out, I was often the only woman in the room. I studied karate extensively and achieved a black belt and certification as a Master Self-Defense Trainer. In 1976, I founded Karate Woman, the first women's martial arts school in Southern California.

WW: You've had a fascinating life for an Italian-American girl from Long Island.

Muso: I came of age in the 60's, steeped in the civil rights movement and the desire to change the world. I married a journalist who got stationed in Viet Nam as a foreign correspondent. I was marching against the war in the states and practically that same week, I was joining him in Viet Nam. My younger self was convinced there was only one

side and that was that the war should end. But when I got there, my eyes were opened to new points of view. The South Vietnamese had another side—they didn't want to live under communism. After that, we went to live in Paris for seven years. I wrote poetry, raised our kids, (adopted from Viet Nam and Brazil) and was active in a feminist writing group. I taught karate and martial arts in French. There were nine men and me. When we came back to the states, I thought it would be a good idea to teach karate to women. That led to my becoming involved with the LA Commission on Assaults Against Women (LACAAW).

WW: And that became Peace Over Violence. I love the way you expand your brand by playing with slogans like "Mama Over Violence," "Love & Pride Over Violence," "Youth Over Violence," "Care Over Violence," and "Teach Over Violence." I still have a badge from one of your events that says "Senshin Over Violence."

Muso: It took us a while to find a new name from LACAAW. Sensei Ensho told me that I probably wouldn't have come up with the name without my Zen Practice. My practice is always there in the background for me and underneath everything I do.



Visiting teacher Pannavati (center) with Muso and Reigen.

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PEACE OVER VIOLENCE *(Continued from page 8)*

WW: And “My Jeans Protest Violence” must be connected to Denim Day.

Muso: We started that campaign after the Italian Supreme Court overturned a rape conviction because the victim wore very tight jeans. They thought it was consensual since she must have helped the perpetrator remove them. Women in the Italian Parliament protested by wearing jeans on the steps of the Italian Supreme Court. I felt that everyone should wear jeans to protest all the myths about why women are raped. POV has organized Denim Day every April since 1999 in honor of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. It’s grown to be a national rape prevention and education campaign to combat sexual violence and support its victims.

WW: You’ve served on the ZCLA Board for 20 years and as our Board President since 2008. What made you step up in this way?

Muso: I was already working for a non-profit, so the concept of service was very important to me. I loved that service was explicit at Zen Center. I really appreciated the intentionality of the Bodhisattva vows. Using my skills on the Board has been my way to serve and give back to the Sangha and my teacher. I learned a lot from Roshi Egyoku. We both shared a love of creating organizations that built structures so that people could organize themselves. We both gravitated towards containers that were nurturing and allowed people to stretch themselves in such a way that could be held by the whole.

WW: Is that similar to how you run POV?

Muso: I like surrounding myself with people who have lots of energy and creativity but are “no drama.” People suffering from violence have enough trauma, so there’s no need for extra “drama.” In Zen, we say “don’t add to it.”

WW: What other parts of your Zen Practice have you found valuable?

Muso: I love the Three Tenets of Not Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Taking Action. I don’t preach about it at POV, but it’s embedded in how we do things and I always try to model the Three Tenets. Our job at POV is to problem solve, so it’s so easy to jump right into action. Taking the backwards step into Not Knowing reminds us that we don’t know everything and need to think about what other aspects we might need to consider. It encourages us to open up, not close down. To breathe and not be constricted. By opening up, we can find new solutions and possibilities.

The problems are so overwhelming these days with many non-profits, including POV, facing huge cutbacks.

WW: You’ve overseen so many projects since you’ve been on the ZCLA Board.

Muso: That’s for sure. We had the retrofit, refinancing, preparation for Roshi Egyoku’s sabbaticals and the transitioning into the Three Seat model. We meet about six times a year, which doesn’t include the meetings of the finance committee. Sometimes we have day-long visioning meetings with the Board, staff, teachers and key senior stewards. At every meeting, the Board takes time to do some council practice as part of our check in.

WW: Council has been a very important practice for you.

Muso: Yes, I trained with Jared Oshin Seide here at ZCLA and at the Center for Council, where I was also on their Board. We’ve also done some council training at POV. The Center for Council has morphed now into Beyond Us & Them, which Oshin still runs.

WW: What’s your routine like now?

Muso: Well, besides my still running POV, Reigen and I are raising our seven-year-old granddaughter Rain, whom many in the Sangha have met. I’ll turn 80 in the fall, so my focus is very much on staying healthy to be around for Rain. I sit zazen several times a week, do a lot of walking meditation, and eat healthy. My family takes up most of my time, but I try to come to ZCLA or zoom in when I can. I continue to be inspired by Dharma readings, poetry and the Three Tenets. I always try to remember Do No Harm, Pay Attention, and Be Kind. If I overreact, I clean it up. If I’m anxious, I work through it.

WW: What aspirations do you have for Zen Center?

Muso: I often say ZCLA is L.A.’s best kept secret. Though we are still dealing with post-Covid’s impact, I hope ZCLA really opens up to a wider community while maintaining the fundamental invaluable training we offer. I look forward to the development of our Open Palm School, with various pathways, beyond just the priest or teacher path.

WW: You are an inspiration. Zen Center is deeply grateful for all your years of service here and out in the world!



Granddaughter Rain at ZCLA 2023.



In the Heat of Practice

by April True-Flower Ford



I live in Sacramento and every year in June, I go into a state of aversion, denial or distraction as the coming four months of heat approach. Then, as a good Zen student, I tell myself, “when hot, just be hot” . . . but what does that mean when I break it down? It’s not just an inner dialogue, my body/mind behaves differently in the heat. I get tired and just want

to lie down. Just lying down goes against all my deepest cultural training going back to the Puritans. In other words, though my schedule allows me to rest, I don’t want to do it. My mind keeps throwing out great ideas for things to do, and my body remains non-compliant. There’s a lot of inner conflict which makes me start whining like a child. Sometimes I actually listen to my body and take a nap. Still, I wake up cranky. Does this sound like a list of complaints?

Well, here’s a list of techniques for dealing with the heat that I shared with a friend who is new to town (she moved here to escape the cold Massachusetts winters). The summer heat here can be compared to getting through a winter of deep snow and cold. Many measures must be taken to take care of one’s own body/mind and that of the other animals and plants.

- Get up early to exercise and do outdoor chores.
- Open the windows and turn on the fans to cool down the house first thing in the morning.
- While this is happening, cook hot food to eat the rest of the day.
- Use a solar cooker outdoors to cook food that needs to be heated close to dinner time. These can be purchased for \$100 to \$300 or they can be made from simple materials via online instructions. They are super simple and easy to use.
- Do not intend to accomplish a lot. Appreciate the chance to rest.
- Take a nap in the afternoon.
- Put out a bowl of water for the critters.
- Drink at least half your body weight (in ounces) of water per day. Example: if you weigh 150 lbs., drink 75 oz. of water per day. If you’re not fond of water, try making herbal sun tea in a glass jar. (Recommended even when it’s not hot.)
- Prepare ahead of time a list of well air-conditioned places to go (museums, downtown library, Macy’s) in case your brain shuts down.



- Try taking the Metro (bus or train) instead of driving your car. They’re well air-conditioned and you’ll lessen the heat-producing traffic on the road. People are friendly on public transportation!
- Also, allow yourself to do unusual, silly or outrageous things—this is your chance! (Examples: perform a ritual dance in front of your friend’s house; sing your question to someone “Is there any goat yogurt?” to the tune of a Gregorian chant or whatever melody comes to you; try washing your hair in your neighbor’s sprinkler; wear colors that don’t match.)

Here’s another tip to deepen your Zen practice. I spent the entire 4th of July working outside in my yard, pulling out dried plant material and, toward sunset, watered down the whole yard in an effort to keep our property from bursting into flames from fireworks. As I got hotter, sweatier, and more uncomfortable, with lots of foxtails stuck in my attire, I was tempted to shoot arrows of blame onto my fireworks-loving neighbors. But instead, I applied a practice which I find very powerful. When I catch myself going into a rant of some kind about something/someone, I say, “THIS IS MINE!!!!” emphatically to myself. Somehow, this phrase helps me to get closer to the origins of this suffering, and not to think it’s someone out there causing me to suffer. It’s my own thinking. I don’t tend to go into a self-blame spiral from there—instead the whole argument just begins to dissolve. Yes, I don’t like fireworks, and others do, it’s just a fact.

Stay calm,
stay cool,
and carry on!



True-Flower is a former ZCLA resident, artist, and environmental activist currently living in Sacramento.

New ZCLA Library Circle

by Mats Borges



For many years, Preceptor Peggy Faith-Moon Gallagher has done amazing work in organizing and caring for the ZCLA Library. Under her stewardship, the library has implemented a digital database, handled the deluge of book donations, put books on shelves, and much more of the often-unseen work that a functioning library demands. This

sangha has benefited tremendously from her efforts, and we owe her a debt of gratitude for it.

Recently, co-stewardship over the library has been passed onto the exceptionally qualified and capable hands of multiple community members, including R Waldorf (they/them). R has a Master's in Library and Information Sciences from UCLA, where they gained experience working in the Law and Clark Libraries. There, they managed the "Seed Library" of seed packets which are freely available for visitors of the Clark. Additionally, experience with public libraries and community archives puts them in a fortunate position to co-steward this community-driven and community-powered effort.

R and I will be working with a number of ZCLA members to manage the library's workload. More volunteers are needed to help with organizing and reshelving books, sorting through donations and either keeping them or finding some place more appropriate for them, managing and updating the library's digital database, making decisions on book acquisitions and downsizing, and managing community feedback.

The Library Circle will start its work with a survey sent to the sangha about their experiences, needs, and desires for the ZCLA library. This reflects our larger goals of improving community access to library resources and its space for meetings and quiet work.

Those interested in learning more about how they can get involved with the ZCLA Library should contact zclalibrary@gmail.com. We plan to meet roughly every month; details forthcoming in stewardship email blasts as dates approach.

Mats is a ZCLA resident and co-steward of the new Library Circle.

ZCLA Affiliated Groups

The Monday Night Meditation Group (Pasadena, CA)

coordinated by Betty Jiei Cole

The San Luis Obispo Zen Circle (CA)

led by Sensei Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Wild River Zen Circle (Nevada City, CA)

led by Sensei Jeanne Dokai Dickenson

The Valley Sangha (Woodland Hills, CA)

*coordinated by Marc Dogen Fontaine and
Michael Jishin Fritzen*

Prescott Zendo (Prescott, AZ)

led by Sensei Jonathan Kaigen Levy

Empty Hands Circle (Campinas, SP, Brazil)

coordinated by Rev. Christina Tchoren Carvalho

Bambushain Zen Center (Aachen, Germany)

coordinated by Eva Jinn Neumann

Outreach Groups

CMC Buddhist Fellowship Group

California Men's Colony (CMC)

(San Luis Obispo, CA)

led by Sensei Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Corner of Disorder

*Only a human can attain
full enlightenment!*



A Heartfelt “Thank You!”

To our Sesshin and Zazenkaï leaders: **Sensei George Mukei Horner** (Buddha’s Birthday Sesshin), **Sensei Darla Myoho Fjeld** (May Peace Prevail Sesshin); **Dharma Holder Lorraine Gessho Kumf** (June Zazenkaï);

To all those who decorated the Flower Bower and to **Sensei Mukei** for officiating Buddha’s Birthday service;

To **Sensei Katherine Senshin Griffith** for leading The Eightfold Path Class Series and Public Face-to-Face;

To our Day of Reflection leaders **Preceptor Elizabeth Jiei Cole**, **Michael Jinsen Davis** and **Sensei Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert**;

To our Dharma talk speakers **Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran**, **Dewayne Gojitsu Snodgrass**, **Sensei Senshin**, **Sensei Myoho**, **Sensei Mukei**, **Sensei Dharma-Joy**, **Mujin Sunim**, **Rev. Shinryu Okuma**, **Jiei**, **DH Gessho**; and to **Earth-Mirror** for the Eco Dharma Chat;

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To **Dharma Holder Nem Etsugen Bajra** for leading Journey Through: Ox-Herding and the Eight Consciousness;

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Sangha Rites of Passage

Tokudo

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Preceptor: Rev. Jitsujo Gauthier

Sacha Josbin Greenfield

Preceptor: Rev. Jitsujo Gauthier

Karina Myoki Beltran-Hernandez

Preceptor: Sensei Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert



Kyogen's Tokudo. April 28, 2024.



Josbin's Tokudo. May 11, 2024.



Myoki's Tokudo. June 9, 2024.